

WASHINGTON – The Committee on House Administration (CHA) by unanimous voice vote Thursday approved legislation that would free bloggers and other Internet communicators from possible regulation by the Federal Elections Commission (FEC).

Chairman Vernon J. Ehlers, R-Mich., said the Online Freedom of Speech Act (H.R. 1606) was necessary to “allow bloggers and other online activists to express their views on the Internet without fear of running afoul of our campaign finance laws.”

“We don’t want bloggers to have to check with a federal agency before they go online,” Chairman Ehlers said. “They shouldn’t have to read FEC advisory opinions, or hire federal election lawyers to make sure what they are doing is legal. They should be able to express their views on politics and politicians without having to worry about running afoul of our election laws.”

H.R. 1606, which was introduced by Rep. Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas, was the subject of a CHA hearing on Sept. 22, 2005, in which the committee heard testimony from bloggers, FEC commissioners and election law experts. It was brought up for a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives on Nov. 2, 2005, under the suspension of the rules. Although a majority of members voted for H.R. 1606, 225-182, it failed to receive the necessary two-thirds majority required to pass items on the suspension calendar.

The FEC is scheduled to vote on new regulations governing political speech on the Internet on March 16, so CHA members thought it important to approve H.R. 1606 before the FEC acts. It is expected that the legislation will be taken up in the full House next week.

“Allowing the FEC to regulate the Internet has the potential of a chilling effect on bloggers and could choke the life from them,” said Rep. Candice S. Miller, R-Mich. “The Internet is a very exciting outlet for political discourse and we need to be careful that we do not stifle it.”

[Click here to read Chairman Ehlers opening statement](#)

Committee approves Online Freedom of Speech Act

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